

Time & Society

<http://tas.sagepub.com>

Precariousness, the Secured Present and the Sustainability of the Future: Learning from Koselleck and extrapolating from Elias

David Carvounas and Craig Ireland

Time Society 2008; 17; 155

DOI: 10.1177/0961463X08093420

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://tas.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/17/2-3/155>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Time & Society* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://tas.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://tas.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 7 articles hosted on the
SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://tas.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/17/2-3/155>

Precariousness, the Secured Present and the Sustainability of the Future

Learning from Koselleck and extrapolating from Elias

David Carvounas and Craig Ireland

ABSTRACT. Theorists concerned with the current status of the future have rightly acknowledged their debt to Koselleck's historicization of modern future-oriented temporality. Koselleck, however, does not address how such a temporality can be sustained. Elias can be of help here. Anticipating recent inquiry into the effects of precariousness on temporality, Elias established a historical link between a present secured from unpredictability and the capacity for temporal extension beyond immediate concerns. Although Elias does not directly address modern temporality, his work, when combined with Koselleck's, can shed light on some of the preconditions for the sustainability of modern future-orientedness. Such a combination of Koselleck's work with Elias's can help lay the groundwork for a more historically informed diagnostic assessment of our current temporal horizons. **KEY WORDS** eschatology; modern future-oriented temporality; precariousness; prognosis; security

The Current State of the Future

La précarité interdit toute anticipation rationnelle et, en particulier, ce minimum de croyance et d'espérance en l'avenir qu'il faut pour se révolter, surtout collectivement, contre le présent, même le plus intolérable.¹ (Bourdieu, 1998)

Time & Society copyright © 2008 SAGE (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore)
VOL. 17 No. 2/3 (2008), pp. 155–178 0961-463X DOI: 10.1177/0961463X08093420
www.sagepublications.com

But projecting into the future is unlikely to occur in people who lack a hold on their present. (Baumann, 2001)

There has been little consensus on how to best name or to explain the temporal trends of the last two decades. Harvey (1990) and Rosa (2003) speak of temporal and socio-economic acceleration, Luhmann (1998) of temporalized complexity, Lübke (1998) of a contracted present and Nowotny (1994) of an extended present. The list goes on. But for all the divergent terminologies, diagnoses and prognoses, those trying to decipher our current temporal horizon agree that the diachronically extended and future-oriented narratives of yesterday have temporally contracted into the short-term episodic sound bites of today.²

Much of the redoubled effort at historicizing the capacity for modern future-orientedness has openly acknowledged its debt to Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte* (Koselleck, 2006), and rightly so: Koselleck's work has best historicized temporality, or the manner by which past, present and future are coordinated, by showing how an orientation to the open future, marked as it is by a pronounced divergence between past and future, between experience and expectation, is a specifically modern phenomenon and not some anthropologically innate faculty.³ This approach cleanly breaks with earlier dealings with modern temporality that tended to stress the gradualism spanning, say, premodern eschatological future-orientedness and modern secularized future-orientedness.⁴ Koselleck maintains that the specifically modern notion of an open future, which manifests itself with insistence only by the mid- to late-eighteenth century, should not be conflated with the capacity to envision a future *tout court*. After all, the capacity for distinguishing between past, present and future, let alone for future-orientedness, antedates the late-eighteenth century. What Koselleck stresses is that temporality before this time could hardly foster a diachronically extended form of future-orientedness: premodern temporality indeed envisioned the future, less at the expense of the past than in terms of the past (as in *Historia Magistra Vitae*), if not in terms of a timeless present (as in eschatology).⁵

By thoroughly historicizing modern temporality, Koselleck's work has exerted considerable influence on theorists concerned with diagnosing the current status of temporality, if not of modernity itself. While agreeing on little else, and while disagreeing even with Koselleck's phenomenologically charged terminology,⁶ such theorists – from Habermas to Luhmann – partake of the Koselleckian thesis that tells us that the mid- to late-eighteenth century advent of modern temporality correlates with a series of semantic changes in central concepts, all of which testify to changed modes of identity formation, social organization and horizon formation that have to this day (or at least until recently) informed our contemporary self-understanding.

But while Koselleck may have helped foster a more historically-minded understanding of modern future-orientedness and its role in shaping our contemporary horizon, his work has not really addressed some of the *preconditions for the sustainability* of such a shift in temporal priorities. Yet it is precisely such preconditions that ought to most concern those intent on diagnosing our current stance towards the future. After all, if modern future-orientedness historically emerged, then likewise it can historically decline. If we are to gauge the current status of our current temporal horizon, we must first consider, then, those social and economic developments without which modern temporality cannot be sustained.

This of course raises a thorny question. How are some of the preconditions for the sustainability of modern future-orientedness to be addressed without falling prey to the parochialism of a particular school of thought? Yet Pandora's box need not be opened here, provided that we restrict our inquiry into a common theme or cluster of concerns that has haunted recent inquiry into the origins and prospects of our current temporal horizon. One such common theme has revolved around *the effects of precariousness, insecurity and unpredictability on modern temporality*. This theme has no less insistently informed works concerned with modern self-identity, such as Sennett's (1998, 2004), which examines how the 'flexibility' and uncertainty championed by economic neo-liberalism affect the (late or post-) modern self's capacity for temporally extended biographies, than works concerned with larger social and epistemological issues, such as Luhmann's (1982, 1998), which focuses on problems of complexity reduction in the wake of the late-eighteenth century increase in temporal acceleration.

It is just such a theme or cluster of concerns that Elias's work can help historically clarify. In addition to their methodological affinity with Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte* as noted by Szokolczai (2000), Elias's analyses of shifting patterns of social power from feudal to court society have most systematically addressed the initial premodern historical correlation between the curbing of precariousness or insecurity and the capacity for temporal extension beyond the short-term exigencies of present survival – a temporal extension without which later modern future-orientedness would be inconceivable, let alone sustainable. Indeed, modern temporality, as historicized by Koselleck, may well be predicated on the revisability of the past and the transience of the present in the name of future change – it may well, to put it in Marx's words, have a penchant for melting solids into air. Yet, the sustainability of such a temporality presupposes, paradoxically, the very secured present from which this modern temporality fancies itself emancipated.

True, Elias was preoccupied less with temporality (modern or otherwise) than with general changes in social structure and their duplication in the psychic economy – in fact, his theory of time is largely subordinated to his social theory

(Tabboni, 2001). If Elias is of import today, it is because his dealings with temporality, although largely confined to premodern developments, can help shed light, however indirectly, on some of the socio-economic preconditions for the *sustainability* of modern future-orientedness. Stressing as it does the correlation between the capacity for temporal extension and the securing of the present from precariousness, Elias's work indeed addresses an issue that has become all the more timely as of late: unpredictability and risk – particularly in the context of an increasingly hegemonic neo-liberal economic policy, with its focus on short-term returns at the expense of long-term socio-economic (let alone ecological) sustainability – have increasingly preoccupied those theorists, from Bauman (2001) and Beck (1999) to Harvey (1990), Sennett (1998, 2004) and others, most concerned about the capacity, or about the sustainability of the capacity for envisioning a long-term future that extends beyond the mere short-term tinkering with what is presently at hand.

Elias's Variation on a Hobbesian Theme: The Politically Secured Present and the Temporal Extension into the Future

When it comes to historicizing the capacity for deferred gratification, let alone for temporal extension beyond the immediate, it is difficult to surpass Elias. His *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* of 1939 trumped the Freudian take on deferred gratification by historicizing these back into their place, so to speak – and this well before the work of, say, Marcuse (1966) and Schneider (1975). Elias shows how even delayed impulsiveness itself could gradually supersede the immediate venting of instinctual drives only when, after a series of developments from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, minimal predictability against indiscriminate violence could be assured. Elias's work, then, does not merely historicize various Freudian categories. Elias dispenses another lesson: it is only by reducing the need for instantaneous reactions to constant unpredictability that an extended sense of foresight can gain a foothold and come to shape our temporal horizon.

In this regard, Elias helps us better understand some of the socio-political preconditions for such capacity for foresight.⁷ He shows how the very capacity for temporal extension could arise only after a series of developments which, roughly from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, favoured increased social differentiation and lengthened chains of economic interdependence at the expense of local self-sufficiency. As functional differentiation became more pronounced, the rapine and plunder enabled by unrestrained impulses – all of which had assured the income and survival of warriors in a barter economy – could no longer hold sway: these would have repercussions which, in the long run, would prove self-defeating for a society increasingly intertwined in com-

plex economic interdependencies in which, as Elias (1994) puts it, 'every action taken against an opponent also threatens the social existence of its perpetrator' (p. 395). Such lengthened chains of dependence could no longer accommodate unrestrained impulsiveness, and, as such, the centrifugal ways of early medieval plunder economy – to be expected of the petty nobility's competition for *immediate* advantage – eventually yielded to the centripetal monopolization of force through the consolidation of strong centralized rule. As the present was thus spared from having to constantly tend to immediate and unpredictable threats, foresight and planning increasingly prevailed over short-term impulsive reaction or the immediate venting of instinctual drives. It is at this point that could gradually emerge, as Elias (1994) puts it, an 'extension of mental space beyond the moment into the past and future' (p. 448).

While restrained affect and thus temporal extension beyond the immediate began to gain significant ground by the fourteenth century, these became more pronounced particularly by the mid-seventeenth century, at which point Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1968) was of course to give this state of affairs its first systematic philosophical and political expression. The temporal implications of Hobbes's work, however, have been only sporadically addressed (Pocock, 1989); and only recently have the specifically future-oriented implications of his work been brought to light (Carvounas, 2002; Michaelis, 2007). Yet it is Hobbes's diagnostic reading of his times that can better help situate the future-oriented temporality that Elias – even if only *à son insu* – was later to address in his unavowed variation on a Hobbesian temporal theme.

Observing the historical developments of his time, Hobbes (1968) tells us that only strong centralized power can prevent the present from degenerating into perpetually impending war in which there can be 'no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth' and in which there can thus be 'no account of time; no arts; no letters, no society' (p. 186). If such a condition is to be overcome, the present must be secured politically from the unpredictable threats of indiscriminate violence. This is to be achieved not only through the centralized monopolization (and thus the procedural legitimation) of the use of force and violence, which at this point at least becomes calculable and predictable, but also through individual restraint of impulsiveness. The political securing of the present is both the product of and the precondition for the restraint of impulse or passions – a theme that would of course later haunt Elias's work.

A politically secured present for Hobbes, then, involves not only a spatial axis – that is, a geographical space (a sovereign commonwealth) shielded from ever-impending violence – but also presupposes a *temporal* dimension or axis that, by making immediate threats to survival more predictable and calculable, enables the capacity for temporal extension beyond immediate concerns. It is only under the aegis of strong centralized rule, so Hobbes (1968) assures us, that whimsical

pillaging, unpredictable harvest destruction and unforeseeable internecine squabbling can yield to the capacity for temporal extension *beyond* immediate needs and threats, thereby fostering 'commodious living' and (to use Hobbes's future-oriented terms) catering 'not only to the procuring, but also the assuring of a contented life' (pp. 160–1). Such a new state of affairs can no longer accommodate an earlier warrior class that, for survival, had to seek immediate gain lest it succumb to the violently enforced ambitions of neighbouring rivals and restive upstarts. At the expense of such an increasingly obsolete warrior class there now arises a class of providential individuals who, through restrained affect and deferred gratification, can muster the hope of procuring (presently) and, most important, assuring (into the future), the 'felicity of commodious living'.

The capacity for temporal extension into the future, as diagnostically addressed by Hobbes, presupposes a present secured from political insecurity. Centuries later, and with the benefit of hindsight, Elias would later echo Hobbes's diagnosis, noting that a secured temporal dimension is largely enabled by the consolidation of centralized rule – a development that, by eclipsing the plunder economy of inter-warring local warlords along with the unpredictable violence it entailed, encouraged the restraint of affect and the control of impulsive action. This 'monopoly of force', combined with increased self-restraint, fostered the emergence of what Elias (1994) calls 'pacified social spaces' (pp. 352–4).⁸ These in turn helped stabilize the present and, in so doing, allowed for a sense of foresight to cast a gaze that goes beyond the short-term exigencies of immediate need.

But to what extent do the preconditions for foresight as addressed by Elias, and as symptomatically expressed by Hobbes, actually apply to the emergence of a specifically modern future-oriented temporality? Modern temporality, with its stress on an extended *open future*, does seem at first glance to tally with what is at least in germ in foresight and, as such, the preconditions for the latter would seem applicable to the former. Moreover, by addressing as it does the secular contingencies arising from the future on Earth, foresight seems to have little in common with earlier premodern forms of temporality (such as eschatology). It would seem, then, that the future-orientedness of foresight is a decidedly modern concern.

Yet for all its extension beyond the immediacy of the present and into the future, the sense of foresight considered by Elias and expressed by Hobbes does not amount to the sustained future-orientedness specific to modern temporality. As it turns out, Elias actually delineates a form of temporality that Koselleck (1985) best describes as 'rational prognosis' (pp. 13–16) – the art of political prognosis and calculation that consolidated itself (at the expense of eschatological temporality) particularly during the time of Hobbes. A closer look will show how foresight, or prognosis, for all its differentiation from premodern

eschatological time, still remains under the sway of other forms of premodern temporality.

Learning from Koselleck: From Prognostic Temporality to Modern Future-orientedness

Prognosis, or what Elias calls foresight, is not *fully* shackled to premodern modes of temporality – yet this does not give us *carte blanche* for conflating prognosis with a specifically modern future-orientedness. Koselleck has indeed convincingly shown how prognostic temporality remains, at best, a limited form of future-orientedness that has little in common with the more decidedly open future of modernity. Before we can consider whether Elias can shed light on modern temporality, we must first assess the extent to which prognosis actually differs from premodern forms of temporality on one hand and a specifically modern future-oriented temporality on the other.

How, then, does prognosis actually differ, say, from the eschatological temporality that it would eventually displace by the end of the Thirty Years War? This is all the more crucial a question as eschatology was a resilient temporality that did not disappear overnight – it after all played a central role in maintaining stability under the aegis of the Church, resorting as it did, Koselleck (1985) reminds us, to ‘the imminent-but-future End of the World as a means of stabilization, finding an equilibrium between the threat of the End on the one hand and the hope of Parousia on the other’ (pp. 7–8). The Church sought to stabilize the present (and its position within it) not only through eschatological imagery but also, and more importantly, through its monopoly over all eschatological speculation. As the Church saw it, unchecked eschatological speculation could only disrupt the given order of things, as the antics of Thomas Münzner all too tellingly revealed. The stakes were indeed high, and to engage in eschatological speculation without Church sanction was in some instances to face a different sort of stake – the sort of stake reserved for heretics and those of their ilk.

The monopoly of the Church over issues of temporality, however, became increasingly difficult to sustain as the events of the Reformation and Counter Reformation eroded its prestige and power. With the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, where the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* replaced the grander universal claims of religion, eschatological temporality no longer fared so well. It was for the most part relegated to the margins by the end of the Thirty Years War. It did not take long before the nascent nation-state sought to monopolize the future no less than had the Church before it, only this was in order to eliminate eschatology altogether, as opposed to repressing particular heretical versions. With eschatological temporality all but exhausted as a dominant indicator for the future course of human affairs, political decision-making in European

courts instead increasingly turned to a rational prognosis that saw the future in secular terms as a 'domain of finite possibilities, arranged according to their greater or lesser probability' (Koselleck, 1985: 13).

Prognosis, then, seems to break free from, if not outright displace, the ways of eschatology. Firmly anchored as it is to the secular concerns of the current political situation, prognosis reckons less with otherworldly and timeless salvation than with the contingencies that arise from the immediate future on Earth. Prognosis, though, ought not to be seen as a mere secularization of eschatology. Unlike eschatology, which *transcends* secular events and points instead towards an inevitable and final outcome that *excludes* alternative possibilities, the calculating foresight of prognosis is instead directed not only towards secular events, but also *towards finite and uncertain future possibilities*. While eschatological time, with its predilection for apocalyptic prophecy, destroys time, prognosis in contrast *wagers* on time. For all its apparent emphasis on future redemption, eschatology, unlike prognosis, turns out to be a fixed or timeless – and thus hardly future-oriented – form of temporality that, as Bakhtin (1988) puts it,

... always sees the segment of a future separating the present from the end as lacking in value; this separating segment of time loses its significance and interest, it is merely an unnecessary continuation of an indefinitely prolonged present. (p. 148)

Untethered as it is to a scripturally ordained and thus foreclosed future, rational prognosis does appear modern when contrasted with eschatology. But for all its differentiation from eschatology, prognosis nonetheless remains tethered to another premodern temporal paradigm: cyclical temporality, where the repetition of the timeless laws of nature leaves little room for the fundamental change characteristic of modern future-orientedness. Prognosis indeed offers but a limited form of future-orientedness, trapped as it is within an essentially cyclical temporality that limits the possible future to the narrow band of time allotted to a single generation; namely, the assumed life-span of individual rulers and the turbulence stemming from succession squabbles (Koselleck, 1985). This limited form of future-orientedness restricts time to natural and not to historical parameters. As such, prognosis has little affinity with the diachronically extended and future-oriented temporality of modernity that would forcefully manifest itself by the turn of the eighteenth century.

With its stress on learning from the past in order to chart the future – or rather, on projecting the past and present into the future – prognosis, moreover, partakes of another premodern temporal *topos* that has proven more tenacious than eschatology: *Historia Magistra Vitae*. Although *Historia Magistra Vitae* underwent variations over the two millennia during which it held sway, its temporal dynamic remained essentially unchanged well into the eighteenth century. Under its aegis, history was seen as but a pedagogical repertoire of past *exempla* from which lessons for the present and future could be unproblematically

gleaned, and this in a manner that only confirms Lovejoy's (1936) thesis about the obsession, well into the late-eighteenth century, for ontological and temporal continuity within some seamless Great Chain of Being. Before the late-eighteenth century, in other words, the past thus held such sway over the present that the future was always already articulated in advance and, as a result, 'temporal difference was not more or less arbitrarily eliminated; it was not, as such, at all apparent' (Koselleck, 1985: 4).

The strength of Koselleck's work on temporality lies in its stress on the need for a radical break with premodern temporality as a whole – and not just eschatological temporality – before a specifically modern future-orientedness could come to the fore. And this break did not come about through the mere intensification of a rational prognosis mired in cyclical temporality. Just as prognosis is not a mere secularizing of eschatology, likewise future-orientedness is modern not a mere intensification of cyclical or prognostic temporality. In this regard, one need but think of Colbert's take on the future which, for all its intensification of prognosis beyond the life-span of Louis XIV – it ventured two centuries into the future – nevertheless sees the future as but an extension of, and *not* a divergence from, the past and the present and, as such, remains within the orbit of premodern notions of time. Indeed, when dealing with problems of ship-building for the future French fleet, Colbert wagers, as Ireland (2004) puts it,

... on the mere quantitative intensification of the given: hoping to anticipate the future need for solid oak masts by the French fleet from the nineteenth century on, Colbert had hundreds of oak trees planted in 1670, which stand to this day unused in the Tronçais forest ... (p. 75)

This stands in stark contrast with the temporal priorities a mere century and a half later: when in 1830 de Tocqueville asks an ordinary American sailor why ships are built to last only a short time, he is told that 'the art of navigation is everyday making such rapid progress, that the finest vessel would almost become useless if it lasted beyond a certain number of years' (de Tocqueville, 1945: 35). While change and the new were not altogether excluded from what Foucault calls the *épistémè* of the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century Classical Age, Foucault (1966) adds that 'this change did nothing more than assure a course on the *closed prior table of possible variations*' (p. 288).⁹ What actually demarcates mere foresight or prognosis from modern future-orientedness is that the former wagers on a future that *perpetuates* the present, whereas the latter wagers on a future that *diverges* from the present.

Whether as social and technological progress, as what Giddens (1991) calls individual biographical narratives framed as future-oriented projects, as a collective tale of unfolding nationhood, or as the revolutionary transformation of the given, various *topoi* of modernity have been predicated upon a temporality specific to modernity – a temporality that Habermas, Luhmann, Rosa and others,

in deference to Koselleck, have traced to the growing mid- to late-eighteenth century divergence between past and future. It is at this historical juncture that the present becomes provisional and the past re-assessable in light of future developments. Such a shift in temporal priorities has of course been most systematically addressed by Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte*, which has given us a compilation of those central concepts whose mid- to late-eighteenth century semantic shifts symptomatically testify to the advent of a decidedly modern future-oriented temporality – the notion of perfection shifts for instance from a timeless *perfectio* to Rousseau's future-oriented *perfectibilité*, and the concept of revolution shifts from the cyclical spinning on its own axis (*revolutio*) to the notion of fundamental and future-oriented change. No longer seen as a mere perpetuation of the past, no longer timelessly projected unto eschatological expectations, and no longer confined to the repetitiveness of cyclical time, the future is instead increasingly seen as different from the past and present. It is precisely this crucial Koselleckian distinction between the premodern and modern orientation to the future that puts Elias back into his place, so to speak. It shows how prognosis (or what Elias calls foresight), for all its differentiation from eschatology, amounts to little more than a modest future-orientedness essentially shackled to premodern temporal paradigms such as *Historia Magistra Vitae* and cyclical time.

Elias's shortcomings are of course understandable. Preoccupied as he was with the historical socio-genesis of a strong capacity for self-control and restrained affect, Elias was not concerned with differentiating between the temporal extension at work in delayed impulsiveness and the specificity of modern future-orientedness. When it comes to the emergence of modern future-orientedness, he at best refers to some vague process of 'downward dissemination' (Elias, 1994: 82) of a sense of foresight that, from the kernel of court society, gradually diffused itself into the general population in the manner of expanding co-centric circles – a gradual process that, starting with the comingling of the aristocracy and the merchant class and later expanding to the nascent industrial bourgeoisie and, later still, to the labouring classes, eventually intensified courtly prognostic temporality, so Elias tells us, into a more socially generalized sense of modern future-orientedness.

As we have seen earlier with Koselleck, however, the mere *quantitative* intensification and generalization of premodern prognosis (or what Elias calls its downward dissemination) cannot, of itself, account for the late-eighteenth century *qualitative* shift to modern future-orientedness. Elias can only take us so far when it comes to the *specificity* of modern future-orientedness. The politically secured present addressed by Elias, however much it turns out to be a *necessary* condition for the limited temporal extension of foresight, is not of itself a *sufficient* condition for the modern future-orientedness historicized by Koselleck.

Extrapolating from Elias: From a Politically to an Economically Secured Present

The advent of modern future-orientedness cannot be fully addressed, then, by Elias's correlation between a politically secured present and the restrained impulsiveness fostered by the 'courtization' of an otherwise unruly warrior political elite, even if – and this itself is debatable – such a courtization somehow later quantitatively extended itself (or as Elias puts it, disseminated downward) to larger sectors of the population. Yet for all its failure to address the *specificity* of modern future-orientedness, Elias's work still brings to the fore some of the preconditions for the *sustainability* of a modern open future – only it does so indirectly and thus requires extrapolation. But such an extrapolation must sidestep Elias's vague 'downward dissemination' approach and focus, instead, on transposing Elias's correlation between a *politically* secured present and the prognostic temporality of seventeenth century court society into a correlation between an *economically* secured present and the marked future-orientedness of the late-eighteenth century rising bourgeoisie.

The grounds for such an extrapolation essentially hinge on the mid- to late-eighteenth century transfer, to put it in Luhmanian terms, 'of functional primacy from politics to the economy' – they hinge in other words (to use the more traditional terms begrudgingly but concessively used by Luhmann himself) on the mid- to late-eighteenth century 'transition to bourgeois society' (Luhmann, 1982: 349). This transition had considerable temporal implications that have recently been addressed by Giddens, Beck, Baumann and others, but that Luhmann has best summarized by pointing out that 'owing to its need for legitimation and consensus', the temporality of politics 'tends to depend for orientation on articulated history', whereas 'owing to its need for calculation', the temporality of economics 'tends to depend on an articulable future' (Luhmann, 1982: 359–60). While Elias fails to directly thematize the reoriented temporal priorities stemming from the late-eighteenth-century shift from political to economic functional primacy, he does acknowledge such a transition, pointing out as he does that before the 'monopoly organization of physical violence' direct physical force was indistinguishable from what he calls 'non-physical violence', such as economic violence (Elias, 1994: 450). So undifferentiated was the economic from the political that Braudel (1985) would likewise later note that only by the Industrial Revolution was the 'privilege conferred by capital made visible' (p. 504). Only with the monopolizing of legitimized physical force and violence, which secured the present politically, could 'the monopolization of the means of production, of "economic" means, stand out in fuller relief' (Elias, 1994: 448).

Now, the economic may well have functionally differentiated itself from the political by the mid- to late-eighteenth century. Yet Elias's correlation between the capacity for temporal extension and a present secured from unpredictable

contingencies did not simply vaporize in the face of the new future-oriented temporal priorities fostered (*inter alia*) by the increased differentiation of the economic from the political. True, this increased differentiation introduced new variables that affected temporal priorities. It nevertheless remains that the capacity for allocating material and psychological resources beyond immediate and pressing present needs presupposes a present secured from constant and unpredictable threats – whether such threats stem from political or economic developments. After all, as Adam (1990) once put it, ‘when instantaneous reactions are required, the difference between the present and the future is eliminated’ (p. 140). If this is kept in mind, it becomes clearer why it is in tandem with the late-eighteenth century socio-economic rise of the bourgeoisie that the shift to a modern, future-oriented temporality takes place. It is indeed at this time that a *politically* secured present, fostered as it was by internal pacification and the monopolizing of legitimized physical violence, eventually yields to the need for an *economically* secured present, the pressing concerns of which increasingly came to the fore, and the contingencies of which were best dealt with by this rising class.

The link between a propensity for future-orientedness and a bourgeoisie rising to political and economic prominence is of course nothing new and has become somewhat of an *idée reçue*. In spite of socio-economic and political disparities between major Western European nations, a general trend, initially consolidated between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, could indeed only encourage the bourgeoisie’s expectations for a different and better future. Such expectations contrasted sharply with those of the courtly classes, whose interests still hinged on the perpetuation of the present order through appeals to past tradition, and for whom the past and present remained the alpha and omega of all possible meaning. In a departure from his earlier work, Elias himself would later concede, even if only in passing, that for all the moderated drives and restrained affect stemming from the courtization of the nobility under the aegis of the absolute monarch’s and the State’s increasingly centralized power and monopolization of force, resilient pre-industrial elites did not share the bourgeoisie’s increased orientation to the future (Elias, 1994). On the other end of the social hierarchy, nascent bourgeois future-orientedness contrasted no less with the lot of the peasantry, which depended on precarious harvests, or of urban artisans and landless labourers, who depended on a whimsical demand for their wares and services. For these, there was little room for manoeuvre against suddenly turning tides: ruin was still only a failed crop away, security depended on the vagaries of the next succession squabble, and their lot testifies, as Elias (1994) sums it up, to ‘an existence without security, with only minimal thought for the future’ (p. 164).

But if the mid- to late-eighteenth century bourgeoisie exhibited an early predilection for future-orientedness, this cannot be shrugged off as the result of

the earlier *noblesse de robe* politics of Louis XIV and others, with its promises of upward mobility for a few hand-picked *favoris*. The *noblesse de robe* and the merchant bourgeoisie merely aspired to and mimicked, and thus perpetuated, the ways of the *noblesse d'épée* (Wallerstein, 1989) – a situation hardly conducive to new temporal priorities (Ireland, 2004). Likewise, if future-orientedness initially manifested itself with force by the mid- to late-eighteenth century, this cannot simply be fobbed off as the antics of a few *Aufklärer* who, upon viewing the *Ancien Régime* with a jaundiced eye, peremptorily decided to conjure, *ex nihilo*, an open future severed from prior social and temporal considerations. The correlation between modern future-orientedness and the late-eighteenth century bourgeoisie is instead better addressed by extrapolating from an Eliasian theme – by examining, in other words, how and why this sector of the population, in the face of an increased differentiation of the economic from the political, was better equipped for economically securing the present from the insecurity and contingency unleashed by an open future.

Such an extrapolation from Elias's work suggests that the late-eighteenth century bourgeoisie's pronounced future-orientedness correlates with its increased sense of an economically secured present in the face of, and in spite of, an open future. This correlation is symptomatically revealed, among other things, by the sort of capital to which this sector of the population increasingly turned; namely, *fixed capital* – the capital invested in future and repeated productivity cycles, such as machines, factories, transportation networks and other infrastructural developments. Unlike working capital (goods reserved for future consumption, such as the hoarding of grain for future sowing), and unlike merchant capital (which wagers on geographical price differences, or on medium-term and generationally delimited repayment, with profitable interest, of loans to individual monarchs), fixed capital in contrast involves a long-term investment linearly projected into a more distant future – a more distant future from which, as we shall see, change is both expected and capitalized upon while at the same time paradoxically managed.

Extrapolating from Elias

Reprise: Fixed capital, the economically secured present and the paradox of the open future

To what extent, though, can the late-eighteenth century increased recourse to fixed capital actually be linked to an economically secured present that might in turn buttress a general orientation to the future? All forms of physical capital¹⁰ are after all arguably 'future-oriented'. A concern with the future no less informs the storage of grain for future sowing seasons, or the hoarding of goods in antici-

pation of uncertain times, than it informs the bourgeois investment in infrastructure in expectation of future returns. How, then, does fixed capital actually differ from other forms of capital when it comes to a wager on an open future?

When it comes to future-orientedness, however, there is a difference between the essentially spatial dynamic of merchant capital, the short-term future of working capital, and the decidedly long-term future-orientedness of the fixed capital to which the late-eighteenth century bourgeoisie increasingly turned. In the case of merchant capital, at hand is not so much a temporal extension into the future as it is a wager on the profits to be reaped from price disparities between different geographical regions (Braudel, 1985). In the case of the stored goods and inventories of working capital, at hand is an investment prompted more by fear of short-term future insecurity (Cipolla, 1976) than by a wager on long-term future change and, as such, it essentially involved:

. . . a form of delayed consumption often operating as a function of inelastic demand in the face both of precarious distribution networks stemming from unreliable transportation and of uncertain supply due to unpredictable harvests. (Ireland, 2004: 84)

In contrast to both merchant and working capital, however, fixed capital – a precondition, of course, for industrialization – is physically imprisoned in some tangible non-liquid asset, such as infrastructural lines of communication and transport, as well as machinery and factories, from which future returns are only gradually extracted over the long term.¹¹

More telling still about the future-orientedness at work in fixed capital by the mid- to late-eighteenth century is the latter's tendency to spur and capitalize on the disruption of past and present social arrangements in the name of future change. Such a future-oriented outlook has little in common with the temporal horizons of other forms of capital, such as Colbert's 1670 prognostic approach to the working capital of oak tree growth for ship mast needs two centuries into the future. Colbert's take on the future amounts at best to a perpetuated present, the social relations of which are left unperturbed by future change. The mid- to late-eighteenth century increased recourse to fixed capital, in contrast, both presupposes and capitalizes on changed social relations in the name of an open future. The most flagrant of such changes can of course be traced to the mid- to late-eighteenth century *exponential acceleration* of enclosures (Wallerstein, 1989) along with the dismantling of guild monopolies, of 'artificer statutes' and of other time-honoured and rigid practices – developments that, among other things, helped create the landless and thus pliable workforce required by the future rationalized production needs of nascent industrialization.¹² In the name of an open future, long-term returns on investments in fixed capital are not to be impeded by Luddite appeals to past tradition. By the mid- to late-eighteenth century, the premodern take on a Colbert future, which merely projects a time-

less present into a *static* future, increasingly yields to a wager on the present changes enabled by an *open* future.

There is a reverse side to the coin of such developments, however. The accelerated implementation of changed social relations by the mid-eighteenth to late-eighteenth centuries – carried out in the name of an open future – did not take place without significant political and economic upheaval. Such upheaval underscored the transience not only of the presently given and of past tradition, but also of the profitability prospects of fixed capital investment in the face of future change. This in turn could only bring to the fore questions about the eventual future obsolescence of the very fixed capital investments in the name of which social change was clamoured for in the first place.

The increased recourse to fixed capital from the mid- to late-eighteenth century onwards has countered such volatility, with varying degrees of success, by means of a delicate balancing act – an act that mediates between investing in the mass production techniques needed for catering to a potentially profitable expansion of future demand on one hand and, on the other, the savings assured by adhering to existing production techniques that meet the more predictable (but eventually less profitable) demands of a smaller, established clientele. It is important to keep in mind, then, that while the *deus ex machina* of technological determinism can often provide a tempting methodological subterfuge when things get messy, it is not the proliferation of new gadgetry as such that fostered the mid- to late-eighteenth century increased recourse to fixed capital, the advent of the Industrial Revolution, let alone the modern opening of the future.¹³ However undeniable the correlation between an increased recourse to fixed capital and increased future-orientedness, this development cannot be fobbed off as the by-product of some newly found utopian technophilia. The future-oriented dynamic of fixed capital by the late-eighteenth century has more to do with a willingness, in the name of future returns, to sink capital into the means for mass production – whether this is to be carried out by massively investing into the large-scale and intensified exploitation of existing or even centuries-old technology (such as wind and hydraulically powered machinery) or, conversely, by investing in potentially profitable innovative technology (such as steam-driven machinery). Landes himself, for all his focus on technological change, stresses among other things that the advent of the Industrial Revolution had less to do with technological innovation as such than with the increased productivity enabled, on one hand, by the rationalized use of a readily available cheap labour force no longer tied to the land and, on the other, by the shift from human skill to mechanization. And this mechanization can be framed within both existing and innovative technology (Landes, 1969). As Landes sums it up, the technological innovation of steam-powered machinery, far from inaugurating the Industrial Revolution, at best facilitated its eventual propagation.

The late-eighteenth century increased recourse to fixed capital, then, cannot

be dismissed as a mere fetishizing of technological innovation, and even less as a blind embrace of unbridled future change for its own sake. At stake is instead a delicate balancing act between risky investment in eventually obsolete means of production on one hand and, on the other, a certain trust that such losses can be offset by reasonably assured future profits to be reaped from the newly created demand stemming from future changes in social relations. Moreover, future profits derived from present investment can later be capitalized on by reinvesting a portion of these in future retooling needs. Finally, should other unwelcome contingencies arise, such as the disruptiveness of a restive labour force, the State can always be relied upon to set things right, as the history of labour movements and their repression all too eloquently shows. At stake in the increased recourse to fixed capital is a faith, or trust, as Giddens (1991) would say, that an open future, for all its unpredictability and for all its unleashed contingencies, can be managed as an issue of calculated probability, as opposed to paralysis or denial in the face of – let alone some blind rush to – future unexpectedness. It is by means of the perceived security provided by fixed capital and by the political institutions safeguarding it (which themselves could come about only after the earlier socio-political pacification of Western society as outlined by Elias) that trust in the future could be fostered. The simultaneous consolidation of the bourgeoisie, an increased recourse to fixed capital and a pronounced future-orientedness, however, ought to be seen as so many correlations and not in terms of causal relations. The long-term deferred gratification at work in fixed capital after all ‘entails a certain trust, knowledge and expectancy of the future; in other words, the future has first to attain reality status’ (Adam, 1990: 124). But conversely, it is by means of an economically secured present that trust in the future can be mustered to begin with.

It is not by sheer happenstance, then, that the mid- to late-eighteenth century increased recourse to fixed capital should correlate with a more pronounced future-orientedness. Just as delayed impulsiveness and a capacity for foresight require a minimal securing of the present from unpredictable threats of physical violence, likewise late-eighteenth century future-orientedness presupposes minimal protection against the *economic* volatility of suddenly turning tides, unexpected reversals and precarious income. If left unchecked, insecurity and precariousness – whether political or economic – indeed disable all but short-term goals. It is in this sense that fixed capital became for the bourgeoisie what the earlier monopolization of legitimate physical force had earlier been for the ‘courtisized’ nobility: a buffer that shields the present from unpredictability and that, in so doing, fosters the capacity for temporal extension beyond immediate pressing needs.

This parallel must be taken *grano salis*, however. Such an extrapolation from Elias certainly has its limits when it comes to dealing with the emergence of a specifically modern future-orientedness. The latter, as Koselleck reminds us,

involves more than the temporal extension of mere foresight; it also involves the expectation that the future will qualitatively differ from, impinge upon and restructure the past and present, and not that the given order of things merely lends itself to quantitative extension as, say, a Colbert would have it.

But to extrapolate from Elias's work on court society and to transpose it into the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries can still shed light on the modern – and our current – rapport with the future, provided that we focus *less on its specificity than on its sustainability*. If Elias has a point when showing how a decreased need for constantly tending to impending threats correlates with an increased capacity for temporal extension, then it follows that a present secured from precariousness is presupposed not only by the capacity for temporally extended foresight as diagnosed by Elias's work on court society but is also no less presupposed by the temporal extension of the open future of modernity as historicized by Koselleck – and this despite the latter's stress, or rather, precisely because of its stress, on a provisional present and supersedable past in the face of future contingency. The sustainability of the future-orientedness of fixed capital, like that of future-orientedness *tout court*, hinges on the management of unexpectedness, or what Beck calls risk, Giddens counterfactuals, and Luhmann contingency. If indeed before the late-eighteenth century, the future and the unexpectedness it harbours were either held in check by the sheer weight of the past or suspended in timelessness by eschatological expectations, modernity in contrast, as Habermas (1987) phrases it, 'is the epoch that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future' (p. 5). Yet the corollary to this temporal shift is that such future-oriented meta-narratives as national history and progress were actually required, Habermas (1987) adds, in order to 'close off the future as a source of disruption with the aid of teleological constructions of history' (p. 12). The open future, in short, has as its corollary the need to manage the consequences it unleashes – and this in a paradoxical manner. Modern temporality (as historicized by Koselleck) may well be predicated on a revisable past and present in the name of future change; yet the sustainability of such a modern temporality presupposes, paradoxically, the very stability at work in temporal extension (as addressed by Elias) from which modern temporality presumes itself unshackled. As Rosa puts in his diagnosis of some of the consequences of an open future (such as temporal and social acceleration), 'it is the very success and ubiquity of acceleration that undercuts and erodes the preconditions for future acceleration' (Rosa, 2003: 16). It is just such a paradox that comes to the fore when extrapolating from Elias's work on the correlation between a present secured from precariousness and the capacity for temporal extension beyond the immediate present.

But beyond the paradoxical dynamic of modern future-oriented temporality – which has certainly bedevilled theorists from Hegel and Marx to this day – an extrapolation from Elias's work brings to the fore another issue; namely, the

manner by which a correlated temporal extension and economically secured present gradually extended itself from a limited bourgeois class to larger sectors of the population. Indeed, a future-oriented temporal horizon would not long remain confined to the emerging bourgeoisie. Modern temporality swiftly migrated upwards, assimilating a declining nobility. More gradually over the following two centuries, it would likewise percolate to the population at large. This new sense of time would eventually expand laterally to eastern Europe and, later still, to colonies across the globe, infiltrating at first the *mores* of co-operating elites much in the manner, as Anderson (1991) shows, that a sense of nationalism was diffused. With good reason Taylor (1989) tells that 'our history since 1800 has been the slow spreading outward and downward of the new modes of thought and sensibility to new nations and classes' (p. 394).

Such a temporality, however, did not permeate larger swathes of the population by some osmotic process. On the contrary, the economic securing of the present played no less central a role in fostering modern future-orientedness for the population at large than it had earlier for the rising bourgeoisie. Economic insecurity indeed quickly became the lot of those faced with the contingencies of unfettered market forces whose fluctuations could no longer be buffered by increasingly obsolescent traditional mechanisms of social and economic protection. This situation, however, was eventually palliated through a series of measures – beginning with the Bismarckian social legislation of the 1880s (later imitated by the UK and other Western nations) – that focused on the predictability of income in the face of the workers' increased economic insecurity, as can be seen in various Acts such as compensation for industrial accidents (1884), sickness benefits (1883), old age and disability pensions (1889).

By economically securing the present for the Western population at large, such measures also duplicated (however modestly) for the labouring classes and the *exclus* those conditions that had earlier been confined to a small budding bourgeoisie; namely, the minimal security without which a future beyond the short term cannot even be envisaged. The capacity for modern future-orientedness was no longer enabled by the *source* of income alone, as had earlier been the case with the fixed capital of the budding bourgeoisie; instead, it came to also be fostered by the *predictability* of wages and other legislative measures that economically secured the present from unpredictable and whimsical market swings. If the unpredictability of wages was such that, as late as 1922, it was declared by the principal governing party of the Third Republic of France to be a residual form of slavery to be duly abolished (Lefresne, 2006), within decades wages (buttressed by protective legislative measures) would become the very means by which an economically secured present could be extended to larger swathes of the population. Such measures would eventually culminate in the three decades or *Trente Glorieuses* between World War II and the late 1970s – a period during which the 'bougéoisification of the proletariat' (Rorty, 1998:

83–4) would reach its apogee and during which initially bourgeois forms of temporality and of future-oriented modes of self-formation, such as ‘expressive self-realization’, as Hartmann and Honneth (2006) put it, ‘took hold of the majority of the population’ (p. 43).

The Future of the Future: *O Tempora! O Mores!*

If for Rorty, Honneth and others, the *Trente Glorieuses* oversaw the intensified bourgeoisification of the proletariat, the last three decades are seen, in contrast, as a reverse process of *de*-bourgeoisification or, to use Rorty’s (1998) phrase, a ‘proletarianizing of the bourgeoisie’ (pp. 83–4) – a process characterized by the erosion of those socio-economic measures that had earlier buttressed the capacity for temporal extension.

Debates over the causes that make the last few decades different from the preceding two centuries cannot be settled here, however. They are as numerous and as heatedly debated as the very names that have been devised to describe the last three decades themselves. But whether we call these decades late modern or postmodern, disorganized capitalism or economic neo-liberalism, flexible accumulation or risk society, the fact remains that a shift in temporality has been taking place – on this few disagree – and this shift has had repercussions on everything from economic and environmental policy to identity formation and modes of sociability.

Much recent temporal change has been increasingly linked to issues of security, risk, unpredictability and contingency. Such a link ought not to surprise. In the midst of precariousness, resources can after all hardly be allocated beyond the exigencies of immediate situations. Such a short-term temporality can in turn hardly foster the forging of sustainable horizons (to use phenomenological terminology) or viable complexity reduction strategies (as Luhmann would say) without which an orientation to the future beyond immediate pressing issues cannot even be envisioned. Beyond academic disputes, we can readily see how McJobs and interim labour, which restrict the allocation of material and psychological resources to immediate needs, no longer afflict only some underclass – they are now mimicked by the short-term contractual work and volatile multiple careers of growing numbers of the professional and middle classes, from educators to software programmers.

Sennett (1998, 2004) and others have shown how unbridled neo-liberal economic policies, by eroding a sense of present security, have led to a contraction of temporal horizons where the extended biographical narratives of yesteryear have been replaced by the episodic sound bites of today. The erosion of future-orientedness – let alone of the socio-economic preconditions for its extension to the population at large – has so disrupted modern self-formation that some have

noted how collective or individual self-identity in the Western world seems to be regressing to earlier, premodern forms. With good reason, Rosa tells us that the current need for volatile short-term responses to immediate problems is 'replacing the temporally extended identity characteristic of classical modernity' – a trend that 'resembles premodern forms of existence in which people had to cope with unforeseeable contingencies on a day-to-day basis without being able plan for the future' (Rosa, 2003: 19–20).

This brings us back full circle to Elias's insight into the correlation between a secured present and foresight. It is just such a securing of the present from the onslaught of unpredictable threats and unbridled contingency that modern future-orientedness, for all its stress or rather precisely *because* of its stress on change, cannot dispose of without incurring the risk of becoming unsustainable, even to the point – paradoxically enough – of fostering a regression to some of the very premodern forms of temporality from which it fancied itself emancipated. Although Elias fails to consider the later developments at work in modern future-orientedness, he at the very least reminds us that the capacity for temporally extended foresight is not biologically or anthropologically innate – 'it can also be reversed' and can give way once again to 'forms of behaviour and experience driven by short-term animal impulses' (Elias, 1991: 134). This in itself is a sobering reminder. While foresight and hindsight may well be involved in minimal cognitive acts, and as such cannot be historicized beyond issues of physical anthropology, what *is* subject to historical change is *the extent* to which foresight and hindsight can move beyond what is immediately at hand. Moreover, when extrapolated beyond the issue of court society and transposed into the mid- to late-eighteenth century, we can see how Elias's work has much to teach us today. Although variables may change (as in the shift from a politically to an economically secured present), the underlying premise remains the same: a minimally secured present is a precondition for a sustained capacity for a temporal extension beyond the immediate present.

Notes

1. 'Precariousness prevents all rational anticipation and, in particular, the minimum belief and hope in the future needed for rebelling, especially collectively, against the present, even at its most intolerable' [our translation].
2. This apparently increased prevalence of the short-term and the immediately present no doubt explains the conspicuous absence of the term 'future' from recently coined descriptions of our current temporal situation.
3. Modernity represents that which is still (or has until recently been) contemporary for us, and it is with the advent of modernity that most cultural concepts and social processes – from temporality and the self to the inner workings of society – initially assumed the meanings that to this day inform our self-understanding. With such a

definition in mind, the work of Habermas, Foucault, Giddens, Luhmann and others suggest that it is to the late-eighteenth century that can be traced the advent of modernity. Accordingly, it is on the late-eighteenth century that much stress has been placed by studies intent on delineating the specificity of modernity – particularly when disputes over the demise or, conversely, the exacerbation of modernity are at stake. Premodernity can in contrast be understood as the prehistory of what is contemporary for us (Foucault, 1966).

4. In this regard, one need but think of Löwith's (1949) work – influential until Blumenberg's (1983) critique – that, for all its undeniably modern concern with future-orientedness (such as notions of progress and utopia), nevertheless fails to address the specificity of modern future-orientedness by reducing the latter to some secularization of medieval eschatology.
5. It should of course be kept in mind that for all the gesticulation of the more intemperate Aufklärer, modern temporality does not reject the past altogether, as can be seen by the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century emergence of such disciplines as archaeology and historiography. Yet this glance to the past is both enabled by and filtered through a future-oriented gaze: it is indeed because the opening of the future so severed the past from the present that traditions had to be invented and national historiography devised in order to reconnect them into linear future-oriented narratives – tales which range from progress and national development to individual biographical projects. This is why modern temporality, for all its undeniable retrospective glance to the past, can only be grasped by addressing its gaze to the future.
6. Koselleck historicizes temporality through two categories: *Erfahrungsraum* (the persistence of the past in the present) and *Erwartungshorizont* (the future made present, oriented to the not-yet). These are not themselves actual concepts; they are instead formal categories that refer to two 'dissimilar modes of existence from whose tension something like historical time can be inferred' (Koselleck, 1985: 274). Although these two 'modes of existence' are anthropologically given and meta-historical, their asymmetrical inter-relation nevertheless varies historically; whereas in premodernity they were in relative continuity with one another, by the late-eighteenth century they pronouncedly diverge. For a critical account about the extent to which Koselleck's categories of *Erfahrungsraum* and *Erwartungshorizont* can suffice for a thorough historicization of temporality, see Schinkel (2005) and Pickering (2004).
7. Elias has of course recently come under fire – some reproach him for precipitously inserting the early modern court within the historical development of the modern state (Adamson, 2000), while others find dubious his attempt to 'combine the Weberian understanding of monopoly with the Freudian concept of civilization as the repression of impulses' (Chaline, 2000: 223). These issues will not detain us here. The focus here will instead be on examining and extrapolating from a particular insight of Elias's which, beyond the issue of court society, tells us that a minimally secured present is a precondition for a sustained capacity for foresight and hindsight – in other words, for temporal extension beyond the present. For a concise overview of some of the critiques and counter-critiques of Elias's work throughout the 'Elias Renaissance' of the 1990s, see Fletcher (1997).
8. To be sure, Adamson (2000) rightly reminds us that the transition from decentralized to centralized power or from feudal to absolutism was never quite as tidy as Elias seems to imply. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there was a general trend, however tumultuous, whereby early modern European society came to be built less

upon open warfare than upon prognostic negotiation and compromise that only an increased restraint of impulses could sustain.

9. Our translation and emphasis. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are our own.
10. Physical capital refers to those goods that are produced but not consumed, either because they are tools and implements (from machines to bridges) which are repeatedly used in productivity cycles (this is fixed capital), or because they are goods reserved for future consumption, such as hoarded grain (this is working capital).
11. It should be added here that unlike machinery or factories, simple inexpensive tools are a very limited form of fixed capital and need not entail a decidedly future-oriented temporality. For more on the temporal dynamic of working and merchant capital as opposed to fixed capital, see Cipolla (1976) and Braudel (1985).
12. One of the best studies about this issue, although maligned by some and considered antiquated by others, remains the work of Maurice Dobb (1946).
13. This point has been repeatedly (and rightly) stressed by Koselleck. More recently, Koselleck (2006) has pointed out that while the opening of the future actually preceded technological innovation, the latter was nevertheless closely imbricated in the later proliferation of utopian takes on the future. We owe this reminder to the anonymous reviewer at *Time and Society*.

References

- Adam, B. (1990) *Time and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Adamson, J. (2000) *The Princely Courts of Europe: 1500–1750*. London: Seven Dials.
- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bakhtin, M. (1988) *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2001) *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1999) *World Risk Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Blumenberg, H. (1983) *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998) *Contrefeux*. Paris: Liber-Raisons d'Agir [*Counterfire: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. London: Verso Books].
- Braudel, F. (1985) *The Wheels of Commerce*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Carvounas, D. (2002) *Diverging Time: The Politics of Modernity in Kant, Hegel and Marx*. New York: Lexington Press.
- Chaline, O. (2000) 'The Kingdoms of France and Navarre: The Valois and Bourbon Courts c. 1550–1750', in J. Adamson (ed.) *The Princely Courts of Europe: 1500–1750*, pp. 67–93. London: Seven Dials.
- Cipolla, C. M. (1976) *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000–1700*. New York: Norton.
- De Tocqueville, A. (1945) *Democracy in America*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Dobb, M. (1946) *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Elias, N. (1939) *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*. Basel: Haus zum Falker [(1994) *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Blackwell].
- Elias, N. (1991) *The Society of Individuals*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Elias, N. (1994) *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fletcher, J. (1997) *Violence and Civilization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Foucault, M. (1966) *Les Mots et les Choses*. Paris: Gallimard [(1971) *The Order of Things*. New York: Pantheon].
- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hartmann, M. and Honneth, A. (2006) 'Paradoxes of Capitalism', *Constellations* 13(1): 41–58.
- Harvey, D. (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hobbes, T. (1968) *Leviathan*. London: Penguin Books.
- Ireland, C. (2004) *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience: Self-Identity, Late Modernity and the Politics of Immediacy*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Koselleck, R. (1985) *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Koselleck, R. (2006) *Begriffsgeschichten [Conceptual Histories]*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Landes, D. (1969) *The Unbound Prometheus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lefresne, F. (2006) 'Précarité Pour Tous, la Norme du Futur' ['Precariousness for All: The Future Norm'], *Le Monde Diplomatique* March: 18–19.
- Lovejoy, A. (1936) *The Great Chain of Being*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Löwith, K. (1949) *Meaning in History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lübbe, H. (1998) 'Gegenwartsschrumpfung'. *Die Beschleunigungsfalle, oder der Triumph der Schildkröte* ['The Shrinking of the Present' in *The Acceleration Trap, or the Triumph of the Tortoise*]. Stuttgart: Schäffer/Pöschel.
- Luhmann, N. (1982) *The Differentiation of Society*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Luhmann, N. (1998) *Observations on Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1966) *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Michaelis, L. (2007). 'Hobbes's Modern Prometheus: A Political Philosophy for an Uncertain Future', *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 40(1): 101–27.
- Nowotny, H. (1994) *Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Pocock, J. G. A. (1989) *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Pickering, M. (2004) 'Experience as Horizon: Koselleck, Expectation and Historical Time', *Cultural Studies* (18)2/3: 271–89.
- Rorty, R. (1998) *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rosa, H. (2003) 'Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society', *Constellations* 10(1): 3–33.
- Schinkel, A. (2005) 'Imagination as a Category of History: An Essay Concerning Koselleck's Concepts of *Erfahrungsraum* and *Erwartungshorizont*', *History and Theory* (44)1: 42–54.

- Schneider, M. (1975) *Neurosis and Civilization*. New York: Seabury.
- Sennett, R. (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Sennett, R. (2004) *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Szokolczai, A. (2000) 'Norbert Elias and Franz Borkenau: Intertwined Life-Works', *Theory, Culture and Society* 17(2): 45–69.
- Tabboni, S. (2001) 'The Idea of Time in Norbert Elias', *Time and Society* 10(1): 5–27.
- Taylor, C. (1989) *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wallerstein, I. M. (1989) *The Modern World-system III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World Economy, 1730–1840s*. New York: Academic Press.

DAVID CARVOUNAS is a lecturer in political philosophy at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on the socio-historical relation between philosophical, historiographical and political discourse. He is author of *Diverging Time: The Politics of Modernity in Kant, Hegel, and Marx*. ADDRESS: Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, 100 St George Street, Toronto, L4A 7X4, Canada.
[email: david.carvounas@utoronto.ca]

CRAIG IRELAND is Assistant Professor of American Culture and Literature at Bilkent University. His is the author of *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience: Self-Identity, Late Modernity and the Politics of Immediacy*. His research interests include Western Marxism, Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte*, and eighteenth- to twentieth-century Western intellectual, economic and cultural history and theory. ADDRESS: Department of American Culture and Literature, Bilkent University, TR-06800, Bilkent, Ankara, Turkey.
[email: ireland@bilkent.edu.tr]